

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20510

October 21, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

CC: Acting Director Young, OMB; Secretary Walsh, DOL

Dear President Biden,

We write today to express our strong opposition to the federal workforce vaccine mandate for all Americans impacted, but especially for employees of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). We do not believe the unique and critical workforce of TVA was taken into account with this reckless mandate, and are deeply concerned about the consequences of its implementation. TVA, established in 1933, is the nation's oldest, largest, and most historically significant regional agency in the United States, as well as the county's largest public utility and sixth largest supplier of power.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that TVA's mission relies on a pool of highly trained and talented specialists. These men and women undergo years of rigorous training in a variety of job fields in order to serve the greater region. Among these workers are engineers, technicians, system specialists, and a variety of other roles.

Our offices have been contacted by countless TVA employees, all expressing their concern over President Biden's September 9, 2021, executive order mandating all federal employees receive the COVID-19 vaccination, with limited exceptions for religious and medical waivers.

To be clear, we are incredibly grateful for the coronavirus vaccine, thanks to President Trump's Operation Warp Speed. However, we firmly believe that every individual, regardless of federal employment status, has the right to discuss with their physician whether receiving the vaccine is the best choice for their individual health needs.

We implore you to recognize the science, that therapeutics work, and that prior COVID-19 infection leads to natural immunity. Many TVA employees have expressed their intent to resign due to this mandate, even if it means retraining into different job fields. The unnecessary implications of an understaffed TVA would be devastating and wide-ranging. Take for example, the seven nuclear units TVA operates. It goes without argument that the jobs at these plants are not only critical to our infrastructure but the impact of operations being run short-staffed or with staff that is not properly trained would be disastrous. TVA nuclear facilities are already experiencing a labor shortage. If even a small percentage of the current employees at TVA nuclear plants resigned or retired, the plant operations would be unable to function.

To fully understand the risk this mandate poses, TVA straddles several categories of the nation's critical infrastructure. Of the sixteen critical infrastructure categories listed by the Department of Homeland Security, TVA is included in: (1) the Energy Sector, (2) the Dams Sector, (3) the Nuclear Reactors,

Materials, and Waste Sector, and (4) the Government Facilities Sector, and it is vital to the continuing operation of many other sectors as well. Further, TVA's role as a regional planner and economic developer is vital to the wellbeing of all Tennesseans and countless residents of the states of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, and Kentucky. As you can see, a wave of resignations caused by a vaccine mandate would reach far beyond the valley and impact households across the country.

We request that the following criteria be deemed compliant with the executive order so that TVA may continue to operate without interruption:

1. Positive antibody test showing prior infection of COVID-19
2. COVID-19 test every fourth day for employees who cannot prove immunity against COVID-19 through antibody testing and chose not to become fully vaccinated against the coronavirus by either
  - a. Receiving two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine
  - b. Receiving one dose of the Johnson and Johnson COVID-19 vaccine

In order for TVA to continue to carry out mission-critical infrastructure operations, we have to ensure that it is fully staffed. Simply put, this federal vaccine mandate has the potential to drastically reduce the talented workforce employed by TVA. The nature of their specialized training will make these employees nearly impossible to replace, and we urge that you continue to work with TVA leadership to ensure they have options available to them to maintain operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,



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Scott DesJarlais, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Charles J. "Chuck"  
Fleischmann  
Member of Congress



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John Rose  
Member of Congress



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Mark E. Green, MD  
Member of Congress



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Michael Guest  
Member of Congress



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Barry Moore  
Member of Congress



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Diana Harshbarger, Pharm. D.